175 578 563 yet with Burma itself. Brought up as a complacent child of a government officer in Burma, this was the first time that I realized how we had unconsciously thought of England, the British Empire, as a permanent world force during our lifetime—a force with which we might bargain advantageously or without success, but one that our fathers and we had taken for granted for all the time that we could remember. But now we realized it as one power—leading perhaps—amongst other powers in the West, and we realized also the existence of Japan and remembered how the Burmans who visited it always brought back stories of the beauty, progress and good manners of the country.

We left our English friends in the first half of August 1940, as they waited, braced for an invasion, to go to what they and we considered a war-free country. I was in the Ladies Room of a big restaurant in London just before I left, when the attendant who watched me wrap my longyi asked me which country I came from. "Burma," I told her. "Burma," she repeated uncertainly. "Is there a war there, Miss?" "No," I said laughing, "but there is a Road there." Yet I was only amusing myself. As we set out home, the furthest that our thoughts of war and Burma ranged, was to wonder whether the Burma Road and the recent closing of it had made people think more about Japan and China than they had done in 1937, when the outbreak of war between the two countries had caused little excitement except that some of my friends became consistent boycotters of Japanese goods. We also wondered vaguely whether trade had been affected, and whether thought and general social conditions had been stimulated with the world-shattering event of a European war, not dreaming that this was but the splash of a pebble compared to the tempest that was to follow.

177. 36 •633 772 Since I had left Burma, my mother and brother and sisters had settled themselves in Rangoon and I wondered how the city would seem after the big cities of the West. Rangoon is not one of the ancient cities of Burma. Its present position in the life of the country and people is a complete turnabout from its traditional place, for in days gone by it had attracted the inhabitants through spiritual rather than material renown. While Pagan, Ava, Toungoo and Mandalay rose and fell in political and commercial importance, Rangoon—Dagon as it was called—continued unchangingly a seat of pilgrimage, connected with fable and divinity, forming an actual link with another world cycle that existed in the universe before this present arrangement of Mount Myinmo, with its surrounding heavenly, earthly and hellish regions, was formed.

632 773 For it was on the hill called Theinguttara, which now casts its shadow on the city of Rangoon with its crown of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, that he omens for the spiritual life of this world cycle were manifested, before

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4



before, however steadily they lay on their mats. The offerings are eaten next morning, and it is greatly to be feared that there are many abstentions from the morning's round of alms-begging. Such dissipation must scatter to the winds any merit acquired by diligent piety and meditation in the long weeks of Lent. It is only to be seen in Rangoon and a few other places where many foreigners congregate. The description is from the "country mouse" point of view.

In country towns, revels of this kind are never seen, and even in Mandalay, though there are festivities in abundance, the monasteries are never invaded in this scandalous way. The difference is that between the primitive Buddhist and the highly sophisticated latitudinarian. A more harmless and decidedly prettier custom is the illumination, called taungpyi pwè, of the pagodas and the town. In Rangoon a very fine effect is produced by hanging the Sule Pagoda, in Fytche Square, all round with Chinese lanterns, from the base up to the top of the thabeit-hmauk, where the body of the shrine begins to narrow into the spire. The rings of coloured light narrowing upwards in a veritable pyramid of fire, produce one of the finest sights of the kind to be seen in the country. The street lamps, however, somewhat handicap the simple means of illumination open to the inhabitants, and to see the illumination of a town at its best one must go to a place where there are no street lamps. There all the pagodas and many of the private houses are lighted up, and the contrast to the ordinary gloom is startling. Candles are placed on posts at intervals of ten paces in every street, and the sè-eing gaungs have very plain-worded instructions as to what will happen to them if any of the lights in front of the ten houses of which they have charge go out. Mandalay Hill at such a time was a fine sight and still is, though it is no more a royal town. The two covered ways which lead up the steep uneven sides to the pagoda and the richly gilt Gautama on the top, look like streams of flame, or fiery serpents from the haunted nat-taung, under the shade of the Shan hills. But the monasteries which cluster close in to the foot of the sacred hill are all as dark and still as on any night in the middle of the Wā. No unseemly orgies are permitted there. In the town, on the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma
Burmese AP4



the two are smashing away at one another with their long hair streaming over their faces and down their shoulders. Friends join in, and almost before you can realise what has happened, the actors disappear, the women and children run off home, and the street is filled with an excited crowd of men swaying backwards and forwards, and fighting promiscuously. For this reason pwès are now never allowed in towns without permission from the civil authority, and numbers of policemen are always at hand to nip any riot in the bud. With the same object performances are only allowed in large towns about the time of the full moon, when there is abundance of light, in case the street lamps should be put out. The worst row of the kind I ever saw, however, was started by two of the Burman policemen themselves. They quarrelled about the merits of two apyodaws, talented *danseuses*, and the crowd, relishing the absurdity of the thing, backed up the quarrel with such energy that broken heads were plentiful and a ward in the infirmary was filled.

Foreigners very often make the mistake of taking the performances of children's companies to be actual zăt plays. Even Captain Forbes, usually so accurate, falls into this error in speaking of a representation of the Wethandaya zăt. This must simply have been a yein, an adaptation of the great drama for performance by the little choral dancers. For people who do not understand Burmese well—among whom, of course, the late Captain Forbes was certainly not to be included—the mistake is very easy. They are far prettier to look at, and much preferable in every way to the actual text of the birth-story, mainly because they are not so dismally drawn out, and can ordinarily be got through in an evening.

The dramas are all founded on the tales which Shin Gautama told of five hundred and ten of his previous existences, or on events in the lives of kings and heroes in India. None of them are original. The story in every instance is taken from the Hindoo, the adapter in most cases not even taking the trouble to nationalise the names of places and characters. It is only in the extemporising of the clown that anything really characteristic comes out. The Hindoo sense of humour is vastly inferior to the

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4



644 on such occa- sions the king appeared in the royal insignia, which otherwise only figure as [643] emblems of state. The insignia in the illustration are surmounted by a queen's crown (*sĭbôn*). The shape of a king's crown is seen in Nos. 151 and 425. There [346] being but a single palace and thousands of *kyaungs* and temples, the palace [344] appears to resemble a *kyaung*. But the converse is the fact; the *kyaung* it is which in virtue of its religious character shares the distinction of the palace. The most recent style adopted by the Burman sovereigns was *Shin-Bayin*—Lord of Lords. A chief title was *Sinbyû Shin*—Lord of the White Elephant. Every subject prostrated himself in the presence of the king, with face averted from the effulgence of the royal countenance. An official called *thandawzin* used to repeat aloud the words uttered by the king. The ensign betokening the presence of the king and of the chief queen (*mîbayâ*) is the *tîbyû* (p. 101). Two to eight were borne according to the solemnity of the occasion. The chief queens were frequently half-sisters of the kings. For all the royal acts, the lying, rising, eating, speaking, there are euphemisms proper to the occasion; one of the most current of these is *shwepawdaw*—the golden foot. At his demise the sovereign is said to migrate to the abode of *nats* or delectable land; the staff of his *tîbyû* was broken. The paraphernalia of the king's service were elaborate; but in his attitude to the *yahân* he comported himself as an ordinary man. The Royal White Elephant was maintained in great pomp; it ate and drank out of golden vessels and had a retinue for its service. An elephant really white—probably an albino—was captured in 1805, but was pampered so that it died. A second was captured in 1806 which lived for fifty years. Other "white elephants" kept for state have enjoyed their reputation in virtue of possessing certain assumed criteria of the "white" variety, as to the number of the toes, direction of the tail-tuft and other distinctions, without regard to the colour of the skin.

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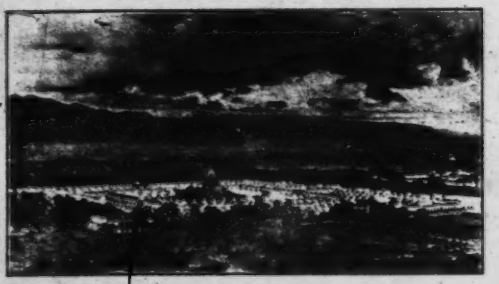
324. CARVED FIGURE OF NAT.

[776] [532] [588] [231]

644 Change of capital at the accession of a new sovereign was characteristic of Burman empire, even when there was no change of dynasty or other political 633 convulsion. Events of the latter kind were no doubt the original reasons of such changes. Next to Pagán, Sagáing, on the right bank of the Irawadi, facing the flat and now desolate site of Ava, is the most impressive of the

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4





368. TEMPLES RAISED BY A MODERN KING (THE KUTHODAW p. 122).

historic centres of Burman dominion. Sagáing was abandoned for the last time in 1776 for a new capital at Āmayapôya (*Amarapúra* — Abode of Immortals) half-way between Ava (*Inwa*) and the modern capital Mandálé, which was founded in 1857, after the accession of King Mindôn Min. The most ancient capital is Tagáung, one hundred miles north of Mandalé. Other capitals were Shwebó, Myinzaing, Pannya. The capitals of the Taláing dominion were Thatôn, Pegu, and Prome (*Pye*). Rangoon (*Yangôn*), at the meeting point of five navigable channels, and with anchorage for the largest ships, has out-distanced all competitors since the modern development of commerce.

For the history of Burma the only available source is the official chronicle kept by command of the kings—*mahá-yazawín*. The first part is occupied with the legendary origin of the race from the cloud-dwellers—*Byammá* (the Burman form of *Brahma*).* The names and doings of legendary persons follow, and lines of legendary kings. The earliest historical facts which emerge are the founding of Tagáung, and incidents relating to the Buddha and the councils of his church in India. It is believed by Phayre that the *Savanna Bhumi* of ancient Indian books refers to Thatôn, and that under *Chryse Chersonesus* Ptolemy refers to the Eastern Peninsula of Asia. We do not reach a connected history till the founding of Pagán about 100 A.D. From that epoch onwards the history of the peninsula, until the Burman Empire was consolidated and the dynasty of

368. FIGURES OF BYAMMA (EMBROIDERY).

* The name is also written *Myammá*, but commonly pronounced *Bamá*, of which "Burma(h)" and "Birma" are corruptions.